

# Honoring Allama Mashriqi on National Mathematics Day

Nasim Yousaf

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National Mathematics Day is celebrated annually in India on December 22, provides an opportunity to honor the legacy of mathematical luminaries who have shaped this field. While Srinivasa Ramanujan is rightly celebrated, it is equally important to acknowledge other trailblazers, such as Inayatullah Khan (better known as Allama Mashriqi). Mashriqi's academic brilliance and revolutionary spirit have left an indelible mark on history.

Born in British India on August 25, 1888, Mashriqi was a prodigious mathematician whose intellectual achievements remain unparalleled. His academic journey began at the University of Punjab, where he shattered records, earning top honors in mathematics. From 1907 to 1912, he pursued further studies at the University of Cambridge in England, excelling across multiple disciplines. Mashriqi's achievements included earning honors in four Triposes—Mathematics, Mechanical Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Oriental Languages—within just five years, an unprecedented feat. UK newspapers lauded his academic prowess: *The Yorkshire Post* dated June 13, 1912 wrote: "Inayatullah Khan, of Christ's, has proved himself the best all-round Indian student ever at Cambridge . . . He is believed to be the first man of any nationality to obtain honours in four different subjects."

At Cambridge, Mashriqi became a Bachelor Scholar and a "Wrangler," a title reserved for the highest-ranking students in the rigorous Mathematical Tripos examinations. His achievements placed him among the elite mathematicians of his era, earning widespread recognition.

In 1918, Mashriqi reflected on the evolution of mathematics, stating: "Mathematics was evolved on these unnatural ideas and since they were taken, mistakenly or out of sheer flattery to the



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Greeks, as ideals, as a result mathematics and the allied subjects remained revolving around them and were confined within the orbit set by these ideas.”

Later in 1926, Albert Einstein recognized Mashriqi’s extraordinary intellect and invited him to his home. Deeply impressed, Einstein introduced him to his wife and recommended Mashriqi for induction into one of Europe’s most prestigious and exclusive societies—an honor he received. For more details, see my article titled “Einstein & Other Scientists’ Meetings with Allama Mashriqi.”

While his interactions with Einstein highlighted his standing in the scientific community, Mashriqi’s influence extended far beyond academia. Upon returning to British India, he became a visionary leader, freedom fighter, and founder of the Khaksar Movement—a grassroots initiative that united the masses and fought for independence from British colonial rule. His organizational strategies, rooted in mathematical precision, emphasized discipline, equality, and self-reliance.

The far-reaching impact of Mashriqi's leadership was evident in the international media coverage it garnered. The work published in newspapers of Ghana, Pakistan, Kashmir, and the United Kingdom documented his influential role through articles such as “Allama Mashriqi’s Order: 300,000 Khaksar Soldiers Reach Delhi and the Sudden Collapse of British Rule,” published in Australia, Ghana, Pakistan, Kashmir, and the UK.

Mashriqi’s profound understanding of human potential inspired millions. He often used mathematics as a metaphor for life’s complexities and solutions. His speeches and writings highlighted the interconnectedness of knowledge, emphasizing education as a tool for empowerment.

The theme of National Mathematics Day 2024 underscores the fundamental role of mathematics in driving advancements in science, technology, and innovation. Mathematics serves as the cornerstone of technological advancements, from space exploration to artificial intelligence.

As India celebrates Mathematics Day, it is crucial to recognize figures like Allama Mashriqi, whose contributions to mathematics and society continue to resonate. While Ramanujan’s genius is rightly celebrated, the exclusion of Mashriqi—a Muslim mathematician of extraordinary talent—is both unjustified and a missed opportunity for inclusivity. Honoring Mashriqi alongside Ramanujan would highlight India’s rich mathematical heritage and its commitment to recognizing all contributors, regardless of background.

Mashriqi’s legacy inspires us to strive for intellectual greatness and use our knowledge for humanity’s greater good. His life reminds us that education, discipline, and excellence can drive transformative change.

*Scholar Nasim Yousaf, biographer of Allama Mashriqi and other legends, has spent 28 years documenting the history of the Indian subcontinent. He has authored 19 books, digitized 19 rare works, and produced a 2.5-hour documentary on Mashriqi. His monumental contributions include digitizing Mashriqi's rare journal Al-Islah and writing a book about Khaksar women. Detailed information about his work and the libraries housing his books is available online.*

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